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## INTERNAL INSTABILITY AS A SECURITY CHALLENGE FOR VIETNAM

## 内部不稳定是越南的安全挑战

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**Abstract**

National security is one of the most critical elements for Vietnam society, economy and political system, their stability, sustainability and prosperity. It is unconditionally the top priority for Vietnamese government, State, Communist Party and military forces. The article proposes a new research approach treating security and military science as interdisciplinary, but two of the branches of social science. Using empirical analysis and case study as research methods, the article is focused on internal instability as challenging security issue that could pose a real threat and danger to the current socio-economic and political system. Based on the obtained research results we can draw some implications and propose some viable solutions for the Vietnamese authority to guard the safety and security of the people, society and also its political existence.

**Keywords:** internal instability, threat, security challenge, security issues, Vietnam

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**摘要**

国家安全是越南社会, 经济和政治体系, 其稳定, 可持续性和繁荣的最关键要素之一。对于越南政府, 国家, 共产党和军队来说, 这是无条件的头等大事。本文提出了一种将安全和军事科学视为跨学科的新研究方法, 但它是社会科学两个分支。本文采用实证分析和案例研究作为研究方法, 着眼于内部不稳定这一具有挑战性的安全问题, 它可能对当前的社会经济和政治体系构成真正的威胁和危险。根据获得的研究结果, 我们可以为越南当局捍卫人民, 社会和政治生存的安全与保障提供一些启示, 并提出一些可行的解决方案。

**关键词:** 内部不稳定, 威胁, 安全挑战, 安全问题, 越南

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world with advanced technology and rapid globalization process taking place, beside many extant economic, social and political benefits there are many appearing challenges and threats that could endanger and destabilize the current socio-economic and political system of any country, including Vietnam. The security issues and concerns understood by those challenges and threats are posed for the international and national community, both from outside and from within. The national security issues and concerns should be constantly screened and updated as the world is evolving at unprecedented pace, with particular exposure to the rising, but not yet fully identified, unconventional challenges and threats that have never been seen before.

In contemporary dictionaries, security is most often defined as a state of certainty of an individual, a group of individuals, or a nation to counter a crisis situation. Security is freedom from or resilience against potential harm (or other unwanted change) from external forces. Security mostly refers to protection from hostile forces, but it has a wide range of other applications. National security in common literature is treated as a state of a nation to counter a crisis situation. It is a freedom from or resilience against potential harm (or other unwanted change) from external, hostile forces. It is the ability to protect national values against external threats [15], [22], [28], [42]. However, in order to balance the external and internal threats and to fill the gap of current research, this article deals with security issues that originate from internal instability caused by unwanted changes and domestic hostile forces based on the case of Vietnam. For any country, including Vietnam, internal instability should be conquered first before dealing with external security issues at the regional and in international level.

The proper functioning of national security system—including law enforcement services, training and research institutes, rescue services responsible for security and (local) government bodies involved in such activities—depends to a large extent on their interdependency and their proper exchange of information [15], [34]. National security remains closely related to international security, which can be considered both at the regional and global level. United Nations experts in the study on the concept of security have defined international security as a state in which nations believe that they are not threatened by military attack, pressure or economic compulsion (sanction), and are

therefore capable of freedom of development and progress.

In this study, we use empirical analysis as the **methodology** for carrying out research, treating security science as interdisciplinary, but a sub-branch of social sciences in order to explore their existing so far arsenal of research methods used by scientists

The **aim** of this article is to focus on internal instability as a challenging security issue that could pose a real threat to Vietnam's current socio-economic development and political system. Based on that analysis, implications for the country will be discussed and viable solutions for the governmental authority to guard the safety and security of the people will be proposed.

In this article we pose the **hypothesis** that, to preserve the national security and stability of Vietnam and to retain sustainable socio-economic development, it is important for Vietnam to focus its attention and efforts on dealing successfully with internal instability (to be strong from inside) before countering international security issues in the region and threats in the global environment.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The science of security is treated is much broader than military science as it includes non-military issues of international, regional, and national security, and individual safety. Security science is an independent and original research discipline striving to obtain a comprehensive and coherent panorama (multi-aspect, multi-dimensional, multi-perspective) of reality from the point of view of satisfying the individual and collective need for security. The development of methodology for research in security sciences is both separate and an intersection of other well-rounded sciences, such as political science, psychology or sociology. Security science in the classification of sciences is a scientific discipline belonging to the field of social sciences. Moreover, due to the objects, subjects and methods of research, and also the type of research statements (hypotheses) formulated and the practical directives, security science is considered as an interdisciplinary science. We are assuming a fairly obvious statement that scientific methods appropriate for security science are, among those very popular in the social sciences, methods of empirical research. This is the method of verification of research hypotheses or the method of searching for answers to the research questions formulated by scholars [30].

As a result, in this paper we are empirically investigating security issues and concerns, typical for economic and military powerhouses in the

world, split into two groups: conventional and unconventional. In contemporary world, we are observing the rise in importance of unconventional security issues, their scope and range, which doesn't mean that the conventional security issues are decreasing in their importance and become less influential. For diminutive countries that are less influential and less open to the world, the impact and the significance of unconventional security issues are less obvious and the division of security issues into such category might be unjustified. In case of those countries, the division of security issues into internal and external ones seems to be convincing and as such we are observing the rise in importance of internal security issues, their frequency and intensity rather than the external security issues originating from outside as a result of a political game of superpowers both in the region and in the world. Having that in mind, we relate to the Vietnam's unique socio-geopolitical context in order to draw comprehensive implications and propose some viable solutions for ensuring the internal security of people, business, society and current national political system as it is still a small actor (player) but growing in importance, contributing to the global security and stability due to its strategic geopolitical position. We are carrying the studies based on the sound theoretical framework encompassing selected security issues and concerns, but with strong exposure to internal ones, of the following dimensions [53], [54], [62]: social, cultural (identity), economic, political, military, information and environmental. The internal issues in such dimensions will certainly pose real challenges, and as a result, could block the whole process of ongoing transition, globalization and integration of Vietnam's economy and society.

### **III. GLOBALIZATION AND SECURITY ISSUES IN THE WORLD**

There is no doubt, therefore, that security is the supreme need of people and social groups and at the same time the most important goal [46]. It aims to satisfy the most important needs of survival, stability, sustainability and predictability of development, well-being and finally human happiness. Multan claims that security can be defined not only as a specific goal, but also as a succession. This means that we are not aware of what it is until we are threatened by its loss [27]. It is assumed that national security consists of relations and links between all of its constituent elements [27]. A common feature of most security definitions is to describe it as a

process. Security is not a given state of affairs but a continuous social process in which operating entities try to improve the mechanisms that ensure their sense of security. All components of this process, more or less measurable, having the character of both dependent and independent variables, are subject to numerous changes conditioned by the internal situation of nation, its regional and international situation [21], [31].

Globalization shapes processes that take place in all spheres of human activity, including economy and security. Economy and security are areas of basic importance for human functioning in the contemporary world, mutually penetrating and dependent on each other. Security and the idea of partnership for peace are one of many aspects and it is treated as a guarantor of sustainable competitiveness of enterprises and sustainable development of economies [31], [29], [13]. Globalization is not a new phenomenon, but it has gained significance only thanks to the development of technology, which enabled the exchange of information in real time and the movement of people and goods globally in a short time. It means an extensive network of economic and informational connections connecting different parts of the world [8]. Globalization is inextricably linked to the development of humanity. In pursuit of development, faster communication, better technologies, man has managed to minimize the differences between societies of different countries, at the same time created common ground for mutual cultural exchange. The globalization process cannot be reversed, we are surrounded by it and we live with it. Although the globalization process has been going on for several centuries, it has been particularly intense in recent years. Governmental institutions that are responsible for ensuring security should be able to limit the negative effects of globalization on social and economic spheres. It is necessary to take action to ensure social and economic security not only at the national level, but also at the international and supranational level. Governments conclude agreements on economic cooperation, join military and economic alliances. It is in these agreements and alliances that clauses on mutual cooperation in the field of security are included. Because globalization is a transnational phenomenon, security activities also need to have transnational features. Globalization means a process of growing interconnectedness between societies leading to events in one part of the world increasingly affecting people and societies in remote locations [2]. Globalization is multidimensional and asymmetrical.

Multidimensionality consists in including various spheres of human activity in these processes: political, economic, social, technological, cultural, ecology and security issues which are closely related to each other and affect each other [16]. Asymmetry depends on a different rate of change in individual fields and on the emergence of opposite benefits and phenomena, e.g. qualified immigrants accelerate the development of the host country, at the same time weaken the development of the country of origin, environmentally burdensome production releases the country of origin from it, but accelerates the degradation of the country to which it has been moved; taxes of transnational enterprises are paid in the home country [53].

The most important economic benefits for many countries resulting from globalization include the inflow of foreign capital, access to information, modern technologies, expanding the market offer of products, increasing the pressure for modernization and increasing the efficiency of economic activity, return on investment, creating new jobs, boosting exports, participation in the international division of labor, economic growth, raising the standard of living, civilization advancement. Globalization forces many companies to become more competitive and can be a way to develop poorly developed countries as it can fuel social, political and economic changes [33], [61], [64]. In the socio-cultural sphere, the main benefits of globalization processes are: increasing access to diversified cultural offer, growing intercultural exchange, openness to cultural diversity, awareness of its sensitivity, blurring the boundaries between what is national and what is foreign, creating similar cultural products in different societies, strengthening its both orientation towards standardization and orientation towards customization [12]. At the same time, these processes have a positive effect on intercultural communication, the opportunity to get to know each other better and understand different customs. Positive consequences of globalization for the political sphere are: dissemination of democratic institutions and procedures, gradual universalization of human rights, unification of international collaboration, cooperation and peaceful settlement of disputes, growing formalization and institutionalization of international relations, striving for regional and international integration, strengthening and empowering communities, greater access to various sources of information, greater opportunities to publicize their own problems and interests, bigger influence on power, self-

organization thanks to modern means of communication and the dispersal of power [24].

As stated above, ensuring security is one of main functions of government and in that area one has to deal with a wide range of threats and challenges constituting real concerns for the whole society, especially for social groups and individuals [22], [44]. Security issues researched in literature and practices are presented as multidimensional problems of multiple levels [48, 33]. Security issues should not be confined to economic, social and environmental aspects and their interaction [32]. Additionally, security research is generally presented as a problem of two levels. First level is focused on individuals and social groups while the second level deals with the security issues in a national level. Research on both levels, however, is very often concentrated on the life or health threat in direct connection with conventional war conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, political or social persecution and natural disasters. Nevertheless, such understanding security does not comply with the present reality. There exists a wide range of scientific studies proving that the present understanding of security consists of several dimensions which might not be directly linked to actual traditional war activities. The human security in a broad sense could be jeopardized also by unfair economic and social practices or abuse of political power by governmental bodies, corruption in national economies, and discrimination of minorities, drugs and black markets [23]. In last few decades, the understanding of security has been changing. New areas emerged which may influence security facets, which were not urgent earlier. Now those facets can endanger individuals or even nations. Breaches of cyber security, separatist attacks or intense cyber wars are becoming more usual than conventional wars in physical space. Violations of cyber security may cause great damage, ruin businesses or even temporarily paralyze full-fledged functioning of individual countries or regions [49]. Table 1 presents the most important issues of security at international level that impact all of us, enterprises and organizations, government and society, groups and individual citizens, regardless of nationality. The presented security issues well researched in the literature of military science divided clearly into two main categories (unconventional and conventional) will be discussed further in order to adopt some of them to be regrouped and presented, in a nutshell at the regional level for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and, in detail, with

division into external one and internal ones, at the national level for Vietnam's economy and society.

Table 1.

Security issues and concerns for global economy and globalization process

Conventional security issues	Unconventional security issues
Asymmetry of interests (of developed and developing countries)	The rise of cryptocurrency
Illegal migration	Cyber-threats: -Information warfare
Global terrorism, extremism and Nationalism	Cyber-threats: -Cyber-terrorism
National defense spending	Cyber-threats: -Cyber-crime
Regional conflicts and territorial disputes	Cyber-threats: -Cyber-espionage
Trade and currency warfare (protectionism)	
Energy and environmental concerns	

(Source: Author's literature review)

### A. Asymmetry of Interest

Currently, the geopolitics presupposes that majority of novel technologies are devised and designed in developed countries with their subsequent transfer to developing countries for the benefit of developed countries first [16]. In other dimensions of asymmetry of interest, it depends on a different rate of change in individual fields and on the emergence of opposite benefits and phenomena, e.g. qualified immigrants accelerate the development of the host country (case of USA) at the same time weaken the development of the country of origin; in international investment the environmentally burdensome production releases the country of origin from it, but accelerates the degradation of the country to which it has been moved; the phenomenon of price transferring due to the fact that the income taxes of transnational enterprises are paid in home country, not where business and production activities are taking place [53].

### B. Illegal Migration

Illegal migration towards developed countries in the world such as USA and Europe, regardless of the reason and purpose, is not a recent phenomenon [20]. It has been lasting, with diverse intensity, for centuries, even its main tracks and destinations remained almost the same. There are routes that are crowded with massive illegal migrants and due to border tightening of local authorities become empty a few months later. The adaptability of migratory routes, detecting, tracking and detailing them are a significant challenge and the analysis and

appropriate use of information on migratory routes are essential for this purpose [6].

### C. Global Terrorism, Extremism and Nationalism

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the increasing connection between illegal migration and terrorism on a global scale has been one of the focal points of security dilemmas that need to be resolved with international cooperation and inter-state collaboration.

The basic question is whether terrorist organizations are able and will embed terrorists among illegal migrants [26]. The tendency of a steady growth of the relative number of national crimes, crimes of terrorist nature, and strengthening extremist orientation is frequently noted in all parts of the world [1], [25], [35], [52]. Terrorism is a multi-faceted and dynamic phenomenon as it occurs in various forms. It poses a threat to individual and social development. It is an act of violence done in a fearful way to achieve extreme political, religious, or ideological goals. Terrorism is continuously changing under the influence of civilization development which makes it difficult to define unequivocally. Increasing occurrence of terrorist acts have mobilized democratic nations to counteract this phenomenon at many levels. Essential elements of cross-border cooperation should be anti-terrorist operations, crisis management, and military cooperation [54]. The grounds of terrorism embraces diverse factors that affect its development, such as: demography, poverty, social stratification, political systems, historic perspective, or religious situation [45], [55].

### D. National Defense Spending

Stabilizing national defense spending is one of the most decisive prerequisites for a long-term maintenance and development of national defense capabilities and security [17]. Facing global and regional conflicts and tensions that pose threats to national security, countries around the world, particularly the biggest military spenders historically, are increasing military spending on arm procurements [4], [5]. This increased spending leads to an armament race and the war crater policy among traditional and newly emerged military powerhouses, endangering world peace and security.

### E. Regional Conflicts and Territorial Disputes

Diverse scientists, including political and military analysts, are interested in conflict intensification, territorial disputes, and the rising



importance of regional powers. Such conditions are due to changing national values in a global world and the power separation between key players on the international stage and in the international system of security [10]. Regional military powerhouses become assertive nations claiming disputed territories on land as well as at sea and in airspace [39]. Soft security instruments, such as multilateral bodies or international policies, are needed to solve regional territorial disputes and conflicts. These instruments primarily rely on sharing, congruence, and the development of values and competences of initiators and participants of security governance [47]. A combination of soft security instruments with normatively harder methods (e.g., economic sanctions) may help to gradually reduce regional tensions, leading to more sustainable security and development [11].

#### **F. Trade and Currency Warfare**

In a globalized, economically integrated world, free trade and exchange of goods and services are critical values for the international business community. To ensure global sustainable development and economic growth, all countries should end protectionism. However, in the contemporary world, there is a rising tendency to place national economic interests above global interests. This can lead to dangerous trade wars and currency manipulation, laying the ground for conflicts of interest between global economic powers as well as between them and smaller countries [59].

#### **G. Energy and environmental issues**

Enterprises operating on the global level are very concerned about energy shortage and environmental issues because of their impact on the living and business conditions of current and future generations [65]. Today, there is a depletion and shortage of conventional sources of energy, such as coal, oil, and gas. The need to guarantee long-term energy and environmental security has directed worldwide attention towards sustainable energy sources such as electricity generated by ocean tides as well as solar and wind power [56], [57], [58].

#### **H. Crypto-currency**

Technology-based crypto-currencies are seen as substitutes for the U.S. dollar, which has been the world's dominant currency for the last several decades [16]. However, crypto-currencies have risks due to their extreme volatility, fragility, current low-level of acceptance, and legal issues. Despite the improved ease of use of crypto-

currencies, these risks have kept them outside mainstream use in international transactions as secured and trustworthy instruments of payment.

#### **I. Information warfare, cyber-terrorism, cyber-crime, cyber-espionage**

As global security companies increasingly rely on cyberspace for communications, external and newly emerging threats, such as cyber-attacks and non-conventional warfare models, have also expanded. In turn, countries worldwide are expressing a growing concern regarding their own security positions [40]. Breaches of cyber security and intense cyber warfare are now often more common than conventional warfare. Indeed, breaches of cyber security may cause greater damage by ruining businesses or temporarily paralyzing the day-to-day functioning of specific countries or regions [50]. Increasing global-level cyber threats have revealed the importance of strong cyber-security policies at the organizational, local, national, and international levels. Currently, international cyber security is not legally regulated in a suitable way, which has increased the significance of national cyber security systems and strategies [49], [50]. Cyber-threats primarily follow global links in cyberspace regarding state and intergovernmental critical infrastructure in the fast-evolving international security environment. The cyberspace instruments used by aggressors are becoming increasingly accessible and affordable as their operational skills progressively advance [7], [47].

### **IV. VIETNAM SPECIFIC SECURITY ISSUES**

#### **A. ASEAN Related Context of Vietnam's National Security**

ASEAN is facing now numerous critical risks and uncertainties to its future. Current developments show that USA can no longer be the sole player to provide security solutions for the region. Other rising powers in the region have not stood on the height of the task and displayed the willingness and capacity to shoulder this burden. ASEAN members have not been able to agree on a comprehensive measure that effectively addresses the aforementioned world traditional and non-traditional security threats. These threats are global and transnational in both nature and impact and therefore, they cannot be dealt with alone by single country or by the ASEAN bloc itself. To prevent potential dispute and conflict, due to the strategic geopolitical position, ASEAN members need to create hand in hand a principled order that can facilitate and

boost more substantive international cooperation on the security issues that are increasingly intertwined and multidimensional [60].

Globalization has essentially made collective security an essential element of national security and vice versa. Relevant stakeholders, both in and out of ASEAN region, should be able to realize this truth and collaborate with each other to build a more sustainable and predictable future of their own. As a member of ASEAN bloc Vietnam is guaranteed a higher level of security than standing alone within the framework of ASEAN's diverse mechanisms and policy of cooperation and exchange, ASEAN's partnership with other nations of bloc in the sphere of security issues. Global security issues concerning Vietnam are better soluble at the ASEAN level than at the national level. In partnership and alliance with other countries and with other ASEAN members in particular Vietnam could contribute proactively and responsively to cope with external threats and solve its own, regional and global security issues in a diplomatic and peaceful manner. For internal security issues and threats, Vietnam should have to take own means and measures to solve them in own ways and no foreign country or external force can help by involving in the internal affairs of Vietnam as an independent and sovereign nation [63].

## B. Vietnam Specific Context of National Security

Vietnam specific context of national security, on one hand, is derived from international and regional context of security. Together with new developments in the world scene of security, some security issues remains timeless, some security issues still keep up with the times, while some other security issues could lose their importance and relevance. In terms of national security of Vietnam, especially the internal security issues, nothing has been change since a long time. Those issues are timeless and constant, regardless of the history, present or the future of national socio-development. Of course, sometimes some of those internal security issues are gaining momentum and increasingly intensifying, another time they are less intense.

Table 2 presents the most important and updated security issues, both external and internal, that are relevant for Vietnam in the 21<sup>st</sup> century's history of development. Those security issues are discussed separately. The external security issues are first and preliminarily analyzed, while the internal security issues are to be taken into in-depth consideration as they are important for keeping the internal stability and no external

force or country can involve in, except the Vietnamese government and authority and Vietnamese people themselves.

**Table 2.** Security issues and concerns for Vietnam national security

External security issues	Internal security issues
Climate change and natural disaster	Internal asymmetry of social interests
Water resources disputes	Political instability
Territorial disputes	Corruption scandals
Sustainable economic growth and global trade warfare consequences (protectionism)	

(Source: [18, 38, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 66, 67, 70])

As pointed and suggested by the title of this article, in this section we are focusing our attention on the mentioned in the Table 2 internal security issues that could hinder and strongly destabilize the national development of Vietnam in terms of the whole process of ongoing transition, globalization and integration of the economy and society.

### 1) Internal Security Issue – Asymmetry of Social Interests

The internal asymmetry of interest means that despite the strong economic growth being currently at the predicted pace of around 6.7% GDP in 2018 [67], one of the highest rate in the world, overtaking probably China and India, but if it is even to take place relentlessly and unceasingly, the social and environmental sustainable development are not automatically guaranteed as those categories of concept are totally different, irrelevant, even conflictual to each other and of course, one cannot be directly implied from other. Rising attention is paid to the wealth gap between different individuals and different groups in the society and unfair distribution of public, common goods and services among them, such as the personal safety, education, social security and healthcare. The asymmetry of interest is also visible in the highly favorable business conditions in terms of the full access to business opportunities, national resources, privileges and preferential treatments dedicated to the public sector of state owned enterprises (SOEs) instead to the private firms and the FDI sector, the main growth drivers in the economy. This peculiar phenomenon contributes to the reduction in effectiveness of the whole SOEs sector and hinders the competitiveness of national economy.

### 2) Internal Security Issues – Political Instability

For the political regime's security, there are both internal and external threats and challenges. The external security issues are already concisely aforementioned. They are obvious and frequently mentioned in the discussion table to find adequate common solutions. On the contrary, the internal security issues are more serious and not very much discussed within the circle of Vietnamese top political elite due to the sensitive nature. Those security issues embracing the degradation in political ideology, thought, morality and lifestyle of a number of cadres and Party members who are involved in bureaucracy, corruption scandals and waste of public resource (discussed later) will still be a serious matter, lowering the people's confidence in the Party and State's credibility and reputation. Overseas and at home, hostile forces will continually implement peaceful evolution schemes, causing disturbances and using the so-called democracy and human rights in order to induce a power change to the current political system in Vietnam.

### 3) Internal Security Issues – Corruption Scandals

Corruption in Vietnam is the most serious problem in the society. By definition, corruption or embezzlement is an act of abuse of title, authority, or willful violation of the law for the benefit of the individual [70]. Corruption in Vietnam has caused damage to government budgets estimated at 30% of so far national investment in infrastructure [66]. Table 1 presents the values of Vietnam Corruption Index and country's international ranking over the period of 2001-2017.

Table 3.  
Vietnam Corruption Perception Index (CPI)

Year	Indicator	Ranking
2001	2.6	75/91
2002	2.4	85/102
2003	2.4	100/133
2004	2.6	102/145
2005	2.6	107/158
2006	2.6	111/163
2007	2.6	123/179
2008	2.7	121/180
2009	2.7	120/180
2010	2.7	116/178
2011	2.9	112/182
2012	31	123/176
2013	31	116/176
2014	31	119/175
2015	31	112/168
2016	33	113/176
2017	35	107/180

(Source: [70])

According to the Transparency International ranking, in 2010 Vietnam CPI was 2.7 out of 10 (countries with under 5 are considered to be in high corruption status). In 2011, scores and rankings of Vietnam show that corruption remains a major concern for the country. Comparing the two years 2010-2011, no significant change has been made in the government's fight against corruption. The CPI index after 2011 used scales from 0 to 100 points. Low scores are more corrupt, high scores are transparent. According to the 2012 survey, Vietnam's scores rose slightly from 2.9 to 31, but were still down 11 points, compared not only with advanced countries but also with neighboring countries in the region. Also according to Transparency International survey of 95 countries in 30 recent years, 30% of Vietnamese people have bribed public servants, 55% of respondents said that corruption increased and 38% believe that the Government of Vietnam's efforts to fight corruption are ineffective. According to the Trace International, in a survey of 197 countries in the world, Vietnam is ranked 188th with 82/100 points, ranking among the top most corrupted 10 countries in the world. The reason of low position in the ranking is Vietnam's bureaucratic public management with many overlapping responsibility areas of public organs. Vietnam's poor performance in its fight against corruption is due to the nation's lack of administrative transparency and supervision by civic organizations [3].

## V. DISCUSSION

Global impacts and challenges are diverse, ambiguous, and multidimensional. Coordinated defence strategies at the regional, national, and international levels should be used to deal with specific changeable security issues and both conventional and unconventional challenges. It is also necessary to adequately restructure the national defence capacity and make significant investments in defence. Every country should balance security needs with development objectives in its annual government expenditures. These decisions will depend on the real GDP growth rate, as national economic conditions often determine the defence sector's budget. Therefore, increased economic development is critical in enhancing the national defence capacity, strategy, cooperation, and coordination at the regional, national, and international levels.

Since Vietnam is not a main game changer actor in dealing with global security, for the purpose of this current research, its security



issues should not be viewed and divided into two main categories: conventional and unconventional threats. Instead, Vietnam's security challenges must be split in two main categories: the external risks and internal challenges to its stability.

Vietnam is one of the countries in the region that is most affected by external risks such as natural disasters and climate change. As discussed above, Vietnam will continue to experience the impacts of global climate change and upstream dam development in the Mekong River. Therefore, the national defence strategy should address these issues and allocate its resources accordingly to mitigate the consequences of natural disasters and climate change. The complex nature of security challenges and threats demands that Vietnam expand its defense diplomacy efforts and actively participate in defense and security cooperation with the regional and international communities. Bilaterally, Vietnam always wishes to widen its defense relations with all countries, and the range of prioritized activities includes mutual exchange of military delegations, access to information and shared experience, cooperation in multiple training and education, and solving environmental concerns and humanitarian issues. Vietnam also attaches great importance to multilateral cooperation in national defense and security issues through international and regional organizations and forums such as the UN Security Council, ASEAN, and APEC to jointly tackle international security challenges and threats. Understanding the dangers of the escalating territorial conflicts at the northern border and the maritime disputes in the South China Sea regarding the Spratly and Paracel archipelagos with neighboring military powerhouse China—and their potential impacts on the regional security and development—conjointly with other ASEAN countries, Vietnam has repeatedly called for peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law and respect for freedom of navigation based on the to-be-elaborated multilaterally accepted common Code of Conduct (COC), instead of the current Documents of Conducts (DOC). This appeal has resonated well with the interests of other countries in the region directly engaged in the disputes, such as Taiwan, Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. These issues have been addressed at various forums and meetings, which has eventually led to a unanimous agreement regarding the urgent need to protect maritime security and preserve peace and stability in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region.

To cope effectively with the extant external threats mentioned above, Vietnam should consolidate its internal structures, in terms of both socioeconomic development and sociopolitical stability. Vietnam should aim to achieve economic resilience, sustainable social development, and political security, while preserving its national identity and culture. As suggested by the literature review and analyzed thoroughly above, the internal security issues encompass three important topics: social asymmetry and gap (disparity); political instability; and corruption scandals. The following are some suggestions proposed by the author to solve these extant problems. The author reiterates throughout this article that solving the internal security issues is a firm starting point and the only way that lays a solid foundation for dealing with the equally challenging external security issues.

In terms of asymmetry between groups in society, the government and local authorities should work together to reduce the following identified issues: disparity between privileged state-owned enterprises and private, foreign enterprises; between high-ranked officials, public servants, and ordinary people; and inequality in disposable income, level of development, and living standards between people in cities and those in far-off (rural and highland) areas. Social tension and unrest are continually on the rise due to the widening the gaps in the society. For example, the gap between rich and poor, the gap between people whose living condition and social situation are better off and worse off.

Reforms are urgently needed to facilitate an increase in the basic income of the majority of ordinary working people. The social insurance system is considered by many experts as especially outdated, unjust and favoring social strata, and in need of wide reform. Otherwise, hostile and opposing forces both domestic and international will take advantage of this injustice to spread propaganda to induce citizens and social groups to demonstrate against the government and political system, to demand power change, to destabilize the normal functioning of the country, and to destroy any prior achievements of state, government and party.

In terms of political instability, the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) as the single, long-lasting governing party in Vietnam naturally encounters many enemies within and outside its political structure and Vietnam. This is especially true in times of economic downturns (crises) or natural disasters, when many social

groups are unsatisfied with their current economic condition and professional situations, and are thus prone to extremist attitudes and behaviors. In the short term, in times of need, VCP representatives should take necessary measures to reassure the people in order to avoid provocation and ensuing nationwide mass demonstrations. In the longer view, long-term sustainable economic development, in parallel with enhancing the social security system is a necessary precondition, and the only way to guarantee a welfare state for everyone, reducing social unrest and tensions, and uniting people within and outside the party.

In terms of fighting corruption, all cases of identified or suspected corruption scandals and embezzlement practices should be revealed and severely punished in public, especially those involved with high-ranking state officials, to prove that nobody is really immune to this deep-rooted disease of corruption in contemporary society and economy. This can follow China's model in fighting corruption. Many successes have been achieved so far in this front, but much more should be done because of the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of this multifaceted, sensitive phenomenon. VCP has been fully committed to the fight against this type of dangerous pathology, characteristic to Vietnam's market-oriented and transitioning economy. Corruption in any form leads to reduction in corporate and national competitiveness; and less state and government policy transparency, credibility and trustworthiness; all of which could significantly heighten social tensions and instigate enemies' provocation. Moreover, larger corruption cases (both public and not yet discovered) could potentially endanger the existence of VCP in its current, quite fragile form. VCP and Politburo members approach this issue in a very serious manner, treating corruptions as an omnipresent, potential danger, and the most dangerous enemy from within; one that is even more dangerous than any potential external threats.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Vietnam as a developing country is currently facing many internal issues. So in order to preserve their national security and stability, and to retain sustainable socioeconomic development, it is important for Vietnam, as a minor but growing player on the international stage, to first focus their attention and efforts on successfully addressing internal instability (to become strong and resilient from inside) before facing

international security issues in the region, or threats to the global environment.

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